IT Unit 4

Topic 2

# Information management

**Ch 5, Ethics & information systems** (Informatics, p 265-270)

1. Define ethics.

* Ethics refers to behaving in ways that are based on our morals and accepted standards. These standards may be common in a particular society or specific to a single organisation. They apply to questionable activities over and above any legal requirement.

1. What implications do they have for an organisations operations?

* The operations certain organisations undertake may not be morally right in the eyes of certain people, this can divide and create angst among certain parties. An example of this would be electrical power plants which create power, but in turn create carbon emissions, which are bad for the environment and is looked at in bad light from the greens party. This can and has resulted in the closing down of certain plants, and changes in the way others operate, this can reduce margins and profitability.

1. Using video games as an example, illustrate how there are two competing principles.

* On the one hand some would argue that protecting children from possibly harmful video games is the right thing to do. On the other hand, others would argue it is more important to maintain a freedom of expression. Often, then, questions of ethics become debates over which of the two principles are more important.

1. When does an ethical dilemma occur?

* An ethical dilemma occurs when there is a choice between two options of equal desirability.

1. Freedom of expression is an illustration of an ethical dilemma. Explain why.

* Because while any attempt to curtail freedom of expression can be seen as censorship, most would acknowledge that there are limits with respect to privacy and fair comment. The question is just where do those limits lie?

**Key areas in information systems relating to ethics:**

1. Workplace responsibilities:
   1. List some workplace responsibilities of both employers and employees.

* Employers are expected to pay staff for the work they carry out and provide a suitable work environment in which that work can take place. In return, the employee is expected to work in the interests of the organisation for the duration of time they are being paid.

1. Code of conduct
   1. What is a code of conduct and what is its purpose?

* A code of conduct is a set of conventional principles and expectations that is considered binding on any member of a particular group. It is written for employees of a company, which protects the business and informs the employees of the company’s expectations.

1. Employee monitoring
   1. Explain how employee monitoring may be considered an ethical dilemma for an organisation.

* Because it means the employee is being watched/observed without knowing, which may be considered unethical because they invade the employee’s privacy, depending on the extent of the intrusiveness.
  1. List the advantages and disadvantages of employee monitoring.

Advantages:

* It ensures employees are doing company work
* It ensures that employees maintain target performance levels

Disadvantages:

* It is intrusive and may impact on employee privacy
* Mistrust may develop between employee and employer

1. Ethics and the internet
   1. What is the role of Netiquette guidelines?

* To keep internet communications ‘polite’, such as newsgroups and mailing lists.

1. Resolving legal and ethical tensions
   1. Why is it important that an organisation resolves ethical issues quickly and effectively?

* Because otherwise it can be a tense and uncomfortable environment where there a rift created between two people in the organisation, which can lead to further implications such as less productivity and profits.

1. Outline the six steps involved in solving ethical dilemmas.
2. **Identify the problem.** What decision has to be made and what facts are required?
3. **Identify the stakeholders.** Who are they? What interests do they have? Who is the key player?
4. **Identify possible consequences.** What options are available? What are the likely consequences?
5. **Identify ethical standards.** Are there many applicable laws? Are there any codes of conduct or standards that could be applied? Is there a precedent?
6. **Evaluate options.** Identify strengths and weaknesses. Identify the option that causes least harm. Can the decision be reversed?
7. **Make a decision.** Select the preferred option. Justify the option.